

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 31st ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD AT  
MANCHESTER, ENGLAND, FROM 1947 APRIL 1-11, 1948.

The General Secretary called the conference to order at 11 a.m. on Friday March 30th.

Chairman - A. Price.  
Vice-Chairman - A. Stoddart.  
Secretary - R. Platter, G. Fehan, J. Flowers, G. Sword,  
and R. McDowall.

REPORT OF THE 4th EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

BRANCHES AND MEMBERSHIP.

A Bloomsbury delegate asked for details showing why 50 members had left the Party in 1944. The General Secretary gave details as follows: Lapsed, 35. Deceased, 10. Resigned, 5.

Resolution - I. Groves and P. Busby (Baling) "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to consider the advisability of sending an E.C. member or other competent comrade to the inaugural meeting of any new branch with a view to explaining branch standing orders and general Party procedure"

It was claimed that when branches were formed by Central branch members in the provinces, the members knew little or nothing about branch procedure. It was suggested that this task should really be undertaken by the Central Organizer. Could not some simple form of guide-book or list of instructions be published giving new branches the policy and attitude of the Party on general questions. The past Central branch secretary said that the method adopted with branches formed from Central branch members had to be varied bearing in mind the members who composed the branch. He thought that very little could be done just by one visit. It was necessary to have a fairly long contact with a group of members before it became obvious what was required in the group. The method suggested by the resolution had not so far been adopted but it might be a useful gesture, but further steps should be taken to see that a competent member went fairly regularly to a new branch. A delegate from Birmingham said that he supported the idea behind the resolution and that if it had been applied in the case of his branch, it would have been of great value. A further contributor was of the opinion that the rule book and branch standing orders were sufficient to indicate to branches how their meetings should be run. Another delegate said that the instruction of new branches should be strictly the responsibility of the Central Organizer. The General Secretary pointed out that when a new branch was formed, it was supplied with a memorandum which had been approved by the E.C. giving guidance on the performance of their duties to all branch officials.

The resolution was carried 12 - 10.

Resolution - J. Lockwood and H. Mayes (S.W. London) "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to consider the advisability of issuing a guide controlling discussion groups"

The mover said that there appeared to be some vagueness as to the standing of these groups, and it would be desirable to have them put on a proper footing with precise instructions laid down by the E.C. His branch objected to one of the groups running a debate. The Groups Secretary said that all groups varied in their composition and experience and that it would be difficult to lay down precise instructions to cover them. In any case there were not enough groups at the present time to merit the time and trouble. For the time being the matter was best dealt with by correspondence between the Groups Secretary and the various groups. Discussion groups did not control debates, this was always the province of the Party, and they were to be guided by the recommendations



of the Propaganda Committee.

The resolution was lost 10 - 17.

(a) Central Branch.

Resolution (A) - Glasgow Branch "That a member of the Glasgow branch be appointed to the post of organiser for members of the Central branch residing in Scotland."

Bloomsbury Branch Amendment "That this conference instructs the E.C. to investigate the possibility of appointing an organiser or secretary for Central branch in Scotland"

The Glasgow delegate said that on reflection his branch had instructed him to vote in favour of the amendment. A Bloomsbury delegate suggested that no decision could be made on the resolution without the facts being known and as these facts were not available the question should be left with the E.C. The past Central branch secretary said that only three members of Central branch were at present living in Scotland. In support of the resolution it was claimed that Glasgow branch was the proper organisation to cover Scotland and that Central branch was too widespread and that it was not possible for the Central branch secretary to keep in personal touch with members.

The Bloomsbury amendment was carried 39 - 15. Sub. res. Agd.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (iii) - Marylebone Branch "The re-organisation of Central branch and its sub-division into regional areas"

A Marylebone delegate opened by saying that the branches in the areas concerned were the best places for Central branch members to meet and that these branches should be the nucleus of a new Central branch organisation. The Central branch secretary had far too much work to do and he could do his work much more easily if he dealt with Central branch members through the branches. A non-delegate asserted that there were a number of Central branch members living within easy reach of London branches and efforts should be made to get them into their appropriate branches. Another non-delegate said that there was no point in taking the step suggested by Marylebone unless something was done to enfranchise Central branch members. The past Central branch secretary said that all applications for membership received from areas near branches were referred to the appropriate branches if the applicant consented. The members referred to in the London area all had reasons for not belonging to their nearest branches, and it would be a waste of time trying to get them to transfer. It was pointed out that steps had already been taken by means of division of work to lighten the task of the Central branch secretary, and that further steps could always be taken if the necessity arose.

Resolution - G. May and S. Cox (Paddington) "That the E.C. be recommended to set up a committee to consider the re-organisation of Central branch" Lost 9 - 20.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (i) - Bloomsbury Branch "Is it possible to improve the way E.C. members and Party officials are elected?"

A Bloomsbury delegate said that except for members who were known for Party activity the names on Party ballot papers could mean very little to members. Bloomsbury branch were not aware of any solution to this problem. Another Bloomsbury delegate stated that unfortunately those who generally were elected to the E.C. were speakers and writers whose names were known to Party workers and there were other members who had excellent executive ability who were not known and consequently were not elected. There was a possible way out. The branch which nominated a member for the E.C. might write a resume of the member's Party activity, including attendance at the branch, activities in branch business, etc., etc. This would be circulated to the



Party by the members concerned when the nominations went forward. Provincial delegates explained the difficulties their members experienced in voting for Party officers. A Lewisham delegate said that a list of qualifications would not be of any assistance, but perhaps an alternative method of election, i.e., area representation, might be a solution to the problem. Paddington branch were opposed to any list of qualifications being placed on the voting paper. There was no method of assuring that the branch would put down the necessary information which the candidate thought should go on the voting paper. That the candidate had done in the past was no guarantee that his efforts had been successful. There seemed no way out of the difficulty until the Party grew and had regional E.C.'s. The situation was not as bad as it seemed. Provincial members could learn something about E.C. members by studying E.C. reports. A S.W. London delegate deprecated what he claimed to be growing in the Party, i.e., the formation of cliques as was general in the Trade Union movement. Branches should satisfy themselves before nominating them for Party positions that they were capable of filling the posts concerned. A suggestion was thrown out by a non-delegate that the aim should be to assure a central core on the E.C. by the retirement of a number of E.C. members each year as had been suggested some years ago. Hackney asked that where members had not previously served on the E.C. their qualifications should be circulated to branches.

(c) Central Organiser's Report.

Resolution - R. McLaughlin Senr. and H. Hayden (S.W. London) "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to instruct the Party Organiser to submit tenders for hire of halls for the Party Conference at the first E.C. meeting each year"

On behalf of the resolution it was claimed that it would have been possible to obtain a Conference hall for half the cost of the present one if necessary enquiries had been made earlier. Against the resolution it was asked if the Conference really required the cheapest hall possible. Further, that the Conway Hall was the most suitable and that the Party were fortunate in obtaining it for the Conference.

The resolution was lost 10 - 15.

Resolution - J. D'Arcy and Pizer (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference rejects the Central Organiser's report on the ground that it is inadequate and misleading"

Bloomsbury said that the report was merely a synopsis of Party activity drawn from Forms "C" and was not a record of the work done by the Central Organiser. Glasgow supported the motion and said that while the report stated that Glasgow branch was organisationally weak, the branch had in fact held more outdoor meetings than any other branch. Dartford claimed that the report could not be considered to be a report in the true sense of the word. That, for example, was meant by the phrase "Some branches are weak in themselves". Palmers Green rejected the C.O.'s statement that his branch were really weak. Another Bloomsbury delegate said that the report was couched in terms which should not be used by Party officials without a considerable amount of explanation. In view of the conditions of 1944 the Party might consider that the year had been a good one. If conditions were as suggested by the Central Organiser it was his duty to have done something about it. Marylebone asked why it was not possible to have the resumption of the Master Form "C". A Paddington delegate stated that the E.C. reports showed what the Central Organiser had done and that it was unnecessary to have this information duplicated in the Conference report. In reply to a question, the General Secretary said that the E.C. in 1944 had related statistics compiled by the Central Organiser.



from branch Forms "C" from the Conference report on the grounds that they were incomplete and misleading. In reply to discussion the Central Organiser for 1944 said that some branches, for a variety of reasons, found it difficult to meet. This applied to S.W. London, Tottenham, Dagenham and Eccles. The fact that last year the E.C. had turned down the Master Form "C" prepared by him because of its inadequacy was a sign of the weakness of branches as all the figures were drawn from branch Forms "C". The conditions last year were common to all London branches but some had remained active and others inactive. The Party should retain its hold on the tried propaganda stations which would be a standby for us in the future should difficult times occur. The statements in the report were justified by the facts. The number of propaganda meetings held in the year had dropped considerably from the previous year.

The resolution was lost 13 - 18.

Resolution - I. Groves and P. Busby (Ealing) "That this Conference requests the past Central Organiser to prepare a report for circulation to the Party outlining the work undertaken by him as Central Organiser for 1944"

Lost 7 - 23

Resolution - S. Leight and J. Kilpatrick (Marylebone) "That the E.C. be recommended to re-introduce the Master Form "C" in future reports to the Conference"

Marylebone said that the re-introduction of the Master Form "C" would clear up questions such as those raised on the Central Organiser's report. The General Secretary pointed out that for technical reasons it was improbable that a Master Form "C" could be prepared in time for submission to branches with the Conference report.

Amendment - W. Hoelias and L. Hawkins (Leyton) "That Master Forms "C" be available at future Conferences"

Discussion on the amendment centred round the tardiness of branches in submitting Forms "C" and methods that might be taken to obviate delays in the future.

The amendment was carried 26 - 3. Sub.res. carried 26 - 2.

#### PROPAGANDA.

(a) 1944 Conference and Delegate Meeting resolutions on provincial propagandist/organiser.

RESOLUTION (B) - S. Leight and J. Kilpatrick (Marylebone) "That an official post be formed within the Party for a full-time London propagandist, and that an appointment be made as soon as possible"

AMENDMENT - G. Wood and G. Waters (Lewisham) "Delete .... 'London propagandist' and insert .... 'propagandist/organiser'"

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (11) - Paddington branch. "The desirability of abolishing the position of Central Organiser and having a new full-time paid post known as Central Organiser/Propagandist; such official to carry out organisational work and propaganda in London and the provinces."

In support of the proposals it was stated that outdoor propaganda and literature sales had gone down during the year and this showed the need for a full-time propagandist to be used at any rate for part of the time in London. Various stations had been closed down, and while the Party were not lacking organisational abilities we badly lacked a propagandist on a full-time basis. There were a number of stations in London very suitable for mid-day meetings. There would not be enough speakers in London this summer, and it would be unwise to estimate the Party's speaking resources too highly. For the time being we were mainly a



propaganda organisation and propagandists and not organisers were needed. It was necessary for the Party to have a full-time speaker if he could only speak for five meetings in each week. Since the resignation of the previous full-time propagandist in London the meetings had suffered badly. It was a very bad move, for example, to permit reactionary organisations to take over valuable stations like Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was in the Party's interests that there should be continuous propaganda at the same stations. The new speakers now coming along could not be expected to run meetings on the same basis as the older and experienced speakers. A Lewisham delegate agreed that a full-time propagandist was needed in London, but Conference should not tie his hands and thus prevent his being used in the provinces. Following on propaganda must come organisation as the effects of propaganda could only be utilised effectively by subsequent organisation. Although London propaganda had suffered this did not justify appointing another full-time London propagandist. Another branch opposed what was called the philosophy of a "Socialist Party of Greater London". The question should be deferred until the end of the war when we could see the steps necessary to be taken. Other points in opposition to the proposals were that a number of young speakers who had passed the new speakers' test were now available for London propaganda this season. The need was greater in the provinces than in London. In relation to the provinces, London was well catered for with propagandists. The real issue was - is it worth spending the Party's money in maintaining propaganda at five midday meetings? The whole question of the appointment of full-time members should be reviewed in order to make sure that other positions should not be filled before further propagandists were appointed. Our Editorial work was one example quoted.

The Lewisham branch amendment was lost 19 - 35

The Margate branch resolution was lost 13 - 37

Resolution - C. May and C. Lustigman (Paddington) "That the E.C. investigate the desirability of abolishing the position of Central Organiser and having a new full-time paid post known as Central Organiser/Propagandist: such official to carry out organisational work and propaganda in London and the provinces"

On behalf of the resolution it was claimed that we needed a full-time Central Organiser/Propagandist to carry out the terms of reference laid down by the E.C. for the Central Organiser, i.e., visiting branches, etc., etc., and at the same time to conduct propaganda where required. Against the proposal it was urged that there might be considerable trouble if one full-time Party official tried to organise the Party, this might cut across the old established methods of running the Party. Another delegate said that some branches seemed to expect Party members to be 'supermen'. It was asking too much to expect one member to do everything required by the resolution.

The resolution was lost 16 - 17.

#### LITERATURE

(a) Party Publications (Editorial). A Bloomsbury delegate asked if it would not be possible to publish in French and German an article dealing with the Party's attitude to the present war for use as soon as circumstances permitted. The member of the Editorial Committee suggested that perhaps the better idea would be to have the revised edition of "War and the Working Class" translated.

Resolution - W. Sykes and A. Young (Bloomsbury) "That this conference recommends the E.C. to make all efforts to publish the 'S.S.' on the first day in every month"

A delegate from Bloomsbury said that they had been informed that the reason for the late publication of the "S.S." was that the material was sent to the printer very late in the month. The effect on non-members of late publication was very bad. Other points raised were that we were not more topical by holding material from the printer as the time taken in publication was so long that when the "S.S." came out it was always out of date. Had the Editorial Committee explored the possibility of obtaining the services of other printers in order to get the "S.S." out to time? Marylebone branch wanted to see the "S.S." out at least in the first week of each month. Other journals came out to time, why not the "S.S."? These other organisations used other printers - why did not we do the same? As often advertisements appeared in the "S.S." for meetings occurring before the date of publication it would be better to keep these advertisements out. The late publication of the "S.S." impaired branch efficiency. An important thing was to have up-to-date notices of meetings, and as branches generally arranged their meetings a month or two ahead, there should be no difficulty in seeing to this. In reply a member of the Editorial Committee said that the "S.S." did not go to the printers late, but actually the material was sent earlier than before the war. The trouble was the time taken by the printer. In addition they did not receive enough suitable articles to enable them to send to the printer earlier than they did. All printers were in the same sort of difficulties, and while we might be fortunate in obtaining a printer with spare staff and time, any change now would be very undesirable. Before the war if our printer received the material by the 21st of the month, the "S.S." would be out by the 1st of the next month at the very latest. Under present conditions there was a five-day week which added at least a day to the time taken by the printer. Compositors were also now unreliable. Recently the Editorial Committee had been sending the material to the printer on the 18th of the month preceding publication. For next month's issue the material had in fact been sent in on the 14th March. The Editorial Committee missed the services of late Comrade Butler who had done a considerable amount of work in maintaining contact with the printer. It was felt by the committee that if the material for the "S.S." could be sent to the printer not later than the 10th of the month preceding publication it should be possible to ensure publication on the 1st of the month. While it was not desirable to use another printer for printing the "S.S." the same considerations did not apply to pamphlets, and if our present printer was relieved of the responsibility of printing pamphlets he might be able to concentrate more on the "S.S."

The resolution was carried 37 - 0

Resolution - E. Beck and T. West (Hackney) "That this Conference asks the E.C. to transfer our paper quota to 'Superior Printers' who are willing to print the 'S.S.' more promptly."

Resolution - F. Lawrence, (Bloomsbury) and G. Hilsdon (West Ham)  
"Next Business" Carried 23 - 3

Resolution - A. Botterill and G. Gundry (Dartford) "That this Conference deprecates the emotional tendencies in the February 'Socialist Standard'"

The opener said that the space in the "S.S." was very restricted and in this particular issue there was a half-page obituary notice and two other articles of an emotional character. Our task was not to appeal to the emotions but to put the scientific position of the Party. Another delegate said that emotion was in inverse ratio to our knowledge. The more knowledge we acquired, the more our emotions became suppressed. In obituary notices the history of the member concerned should not be given. The job of the "S.S." was to show the workers how to abolish capitalism. Opposing the resolution it was said that Dartford



had misunderstood the purpose of the 'S.S.' It was not sufficient merely to present a dry set of facts and figures. In the past we had been too "bloodless" and lacking in the emotional appeal arising from the degradation of the working-class. Emotions should, however, be backed up with facts. A member of the Editorial Committee did not agree that knowledge was in inverse ratio to emotion. It was truer to say that with an increased knowledge of capitalism there grew an intense hatred of the system.

The resolution was lost 8 - 27.

On pamphlets Hackney asked why the pamphlet on Russia had not yet been published. A member of the Editorial Committee replied that about one-third of the pamphlet had now been written and that it should not take long now before it was finished.

RESOLUTION (C) - Leyton Branch. "This Conference recommends that the statement 'Socialists and War' be included in the revised edition of the pamphlet 'War and the Working Class'"

Ealing Branch Amendment. "Insert after ... 'be' .... 'brought up-to-date if necessary and'"

Southend Branch Amendment. "That the statement 'Socialists and War' and 'War and the Working Class' be published as separate pamphlets"

It was claimed that "Socialists and War" was a historical survey of a development of Party thought and would overburden "War and the Working Class". A delegate suggested that the substance of the Party statement could be included in the revised edition of the pamphlet. Another view was that the question should be left until after the war when paper would be more freely available. Lewisham opposed the publication of the Party statement on the grounds that it was not sufficiently digestible to the average person we wish to bring over to our point of view. We should have something more effective. The statement was half-way between a pamphlet and a book. Another delegate said that the statement was a Party document, and it would appeal to a limited number of people only and therefore have a small circulation as a pamphlet. Southend stated that the purpose of all Party publications was propaganda, and the proper place for the statement was in the history of the Party. A member of the Editorial Committee said that the statement did not lend itself to publication as a separate pamphlet, but it might be published as an appendix to "War and the Working Class".

The Southend amendment was lost 4 - 40.

The Ealing amendment was lost 13 - 31.

Leyton resolution (C) was lost 5 - 37.

RESOLUTION (D) - Glasgow Branch "That this Conference instructs the E.C. to appoint a special committee to investigate the present style of the 'S.S.' with a view to altering the size, composition, etc., to more in keeping with modern methods of publication."

Islington Branch Addendum. "Add .... 'and that the committee also consider the possibility of appointing a full-time paid official of the Editorial Committee'"

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (viii) - Hackney Branch. "The appointment of a full-time paid member of the Editorial Committee"

The Glasgow delegate in opening said that the "S.S." should be pepped up considerably. Sub-headings should be introduced which would make the journal appeal and it would be more easily read. This question should be gone into by an elected committee but should be seriously considered by the Conference. The front page should be laid out in a more attractive fashion. We should



"S.S." The  
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aim at something like the "Western Socialist". Another delegate said that the only way to improve the "S.S." was by appointing a full-time member of the Editorial Committee. This member could also get out pamphlets more quickly and enable the "S.S." to be published fortnightly. Continuing the discussion, a non-delegate said that we must make up our minds whether we wanted a theoretical magazine or a popular journal which dealt with topical issues as they arose. If we wish to increase the circulation to appeal to people who are not already interested we might consider publishing an internal Party magazine dealing with things that interested Party members. The standard of the "S.S." was deplorable, but this was not the responsibility of the Editorial Committee but the responsibility of the members of the Party. The range of the contributors to the "S.S." was very low. There was a lack of a wide and deep general knowledge among writers. A suggestion was made that there should be a regular editorial conference where views might be interchanged and plans drawn up. This would give writers a clearer idea of what was wanted. It was scandalous that members of the Editorial Committee had to worry about getting the "S.S." printed, getting articles typed, etc. There should be someone appointed to deal with the business end of the "S.S." We should not write down to the workers, the workers were now getting used to a high standard of writing. A further contributor said that there was a growing feeling among the younger members of the Party that the "S.S." was not the sort of thing they wanted. It was a dull journal. Young members found it difficult to express themselves on this matter but would point to other journals such as the "Western Socialist" and say "That is the sort of thing we want." Reference was made to earlier writers in the "S.S." as examples of the style required. The "S.S." was dull because of the repetitive character of the articles. Journals published abroad by other organisations were also quoted. In its present form it would not be desirable to have a fortnightly "S.S." The proposals were opposed on the grounds that the "S.S." was constantly being reviewed by the E.C. and Editorial Committee, and there was no need for a special committee. Glasgow branch should give more information as to the kind of thing they had in mind. Did Glasgow, for example, want the size of the "S.S." reduced to the form of a magazine? The lay-out of the "S.S." was constantly under review by the Publicity Committee. The present arrangement of the "S.S." was forced on us by the restriction of paper supplies. With an eight-page "S.S." we could not afford to have the cover set out as it was before the war. Sub-headings had been abandoned because they took up a considerable amount of space. Small type had been introduced in order to get more matter into the paper. The "Western Socialist" did not suffer from paper restrictions and they were able to plan it as they wished. The Editorial Committee could do with a full-time secretary-typist to take copies of articles received, etc. This appointment would also save a lot of time in getting out the "S.S." Another member of the Editorial Committee agreed with a considerable amount of the criticism levelled at the "S.S." The Party had had an internal journal some years ago but this had fallen through after a time. Objection was raised to the sweeping statement that the "S.S." was deplorable. It was true that there was room for improvement, but at least half of the articles published in the "Western Socialist" were sent over by the Editorial Committee, and these were similar articles to those published by us, and the "Western Socialist" had asked for more of them. Unfortunately writers of the present day did not all possess the wide general knowledge of writers in the past. This was probably due to present conditions which made it difficult to spend time reading the classical writers on socialism. A long period of training was necessary before members could be effective writers for the Party. In the past, objection had been raised to theoretical articles appearing in the "S.S." but in the view of the contributor, the



"S.S." should be partly theoretical and partly topical.

The Islington addendum was lost 22 - 27.

Resolution (D) was carried 25 - 24.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (vii) - Bloomsbury Branch.  
"The way to prepare for a fortnightly 'Socialist Standard'"

"The way to pre-

A member of the Editorial Committee said that the Party would probably quite soon be pressing for a weekly "S.S." As a step to this it would first be better to consider the steps necessary to turn the "S.S." into a fortnightly journal. The supply of articles will be a problem to be tackled; a large number of competent writers will be necessary. A fortnightly journal must be turned out promptly. If our present printer cannot do this we should have to find another one. Typing assistance would also have to be obtained. If a fulltime typist could not be secured perhaps some form of a typing pool could be arranged composed of members able to give some of their time. The circulation of a fortnightly journal would be quite a different problem to that of a monthly journal. The whole process of circulation would have to be speeded up very considerably. Perhaps a committee could be set up to deal with the problems of circulation of a fortnightly paper. As a preliminary to the publication of a fortnightly issue, the "S.S." should first be considerably increased in size. For example, a 32-page monthly "S.S." would provide a sufficient number of articles for a 16-page fortnightly.

Resolution - F. Lawrence and J. D'Arcy (Bloomsbury) "That the E.C. be recommended to ask the committee set up under Resolution (D) to investigate the question of publishing a fortnightly "S.S." and that the findings of this committee on the subject be circulated to the Party.  
Carried 21 - 11.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (v) - Manchester Branch. "The possibility of producing a pamphlet containing a glossary of 'difficult terms' used in Party literature and economic studies (expressions such as 'materialism', 'value', 'wealth', 'production'). Such a pamphlet could be used as a reference when workers are studying controversial political literature".

It was claimed that there was confusion in the Party about the terms used in Party propaganda. A glossary would help considerably. An instance was given of a long discussion in a branch over the meaning of a particular term. It was not suggested that a glossary would be a substitute for knowledge but it was not possible to understand any science without having a grip of the terms used. The idea was opposed on the grounds that a number of more useful pamphlets was required and paper was short. Further opposition was that there was no short-cut to knowledge, and that this idea seemed to lurk behind the suggestion. A glossary would not clear up any confusion but would, in fact, still further fog the issues. Why not have a brief footnote when terms are used in pamphlets, giving an outline of the meaning of the words.

Resolution - R. Lees (Manchester) and J. Lockwood (S.W. London)  
"That the E.C. be recommended to consider the possibility of producing a pamphlet along the lines suggested by the 'Item for discussion'"  
Lost 12 - 22.

(d) Party Publication (Distributions)

The Literature Secretary said that if branches wished the libraries in their areas supplied with the "S.S.", they should obtain the consent of the libraries in question, when the "S.S." would be supplied free of charge. A delegate questioned whether such a large number of copies should be sent abroad. The need was great here and we should also be establishing connections with distributing houses in view of the possibilities of



publishing a fortnightly "S.S." The Literature Secretary pointed out that the "S.S." was for some Parties abroad practically their only medium for written propaganda, and it seemed undesirable to cut down further their already small supplies. Paddington questioned the decision of the present E.C. in cutting down the number of the reprint of the pamphlet "Questions of the Day" in order to print a leaflet on Trade Unionism.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (vi) - Manchester Branch. "That the Party consider publishing more pamphlets on topical subjects in the style of 'Family Allowances' and 'Beveridge Reorganises Poverty'"

Manchester had found the sales of these pamphlets highly successful.

Resolution - R. Lees (Manchester) and J. D'Arcy (Bloomsbury)

"That the E.C. be recommended to consider publishing more pamphlets on topical subjects".

Carried 26 - 0

#### H.O. PREMISES.

Resolution - C. May and A. McLean (Paddington) "That this conference recommends the E.C. to obtain more commodious and suitable H.O. premises".

A member of the premises committee stated that our agreement for Rugby Chambers expired in September, when it could be renewed for a further period of three years. He added that in the view of his committee the accommodation at Head Office was adequate, bearing in mind that no members had complained of the premises. Should Head Office become unduly strained for accommodation on Tuesday evenings, it might be possible to hire a small hall in the district just for that evening. On behalf of the resolution it was claimed that Head Office was extremely crowded on E.C. nights, and that Party officials found it difficult to carry on their work.

The resolution was lost 5 - 23.

#### PARTIES ABROAD.

A greetings cablegram was read from the Socialist Party of New Zealand.

Resolution - W. Heelas (Leyton) and R. Bowie (Southend) "To our companion Parties in the Socialist International greetings. The days that have sorely tried us are passing over and we emerge stronger than ever. After five years of stress and the shattering bomb, with the added strain of war propaganda, our message of hope finds a growing volume of sympathetic listeners and the promise of Socialism intimes not far distant is bright. We here, and you across the seas are the harbingers of the new society and the early fruition of our hopes depends upon the energy we all put into the struggle. With the enthusiasm born of this conviction we send to you, our brothers in the fray, a message of fraternal greetings and earnest wishes for rapid progress towards our goal - the earth and the fulness thereof for the equal enjoyment of all"

Carried unanimously.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (iv) - Ealing Branch. "Should the post of Overseas Secretary be made a Party position to be filled annually by Party poll?"

In support of the proposal it was claimed that the position of Overseas Secretary was becoming increasingly important, and would continue to do so with the growth of the Socialist International. He should be appointed directly by the Party, and this would obviate the necessity of having to place all correspondence concerning policy or controversy before the Executive Committee. A delegate asked if in view of the increased work falling on the



Overseas Secretary some assistance could not be given to him. The Overseas Secretary stated that he wished to correct an incorrect statement - he had no wish to be released from the necessity of placing items dealing with policy or controversy before the E.C.

Resolution - C. Curtis (Ealing) and E. Fowie (Southend) "That this Conference is of the opinion that the post of Overseas Secretary should remain under the control of the E.C., but also that assistance should be provided as the work increases".

Amendment - C. May and A. McLean "That this conference agrees with the present method of election of the Overseas Secretary".

The amendment was carried 29 - 3. Sub. res. 29 - 2.

#### ELECTORAL ACTION.

Standing Orders having been suspended at this period by a Conference decision on the previous day, discussion took place on the E.C.'s decision that the constituency of North Paddington should be contested by the Party at the next General Election. The General Secretary read out the report submitted by the Parliamentary Committee which had been followed by the E.C.'s decision.

The first contributor said that it would be noted that the Parliamentary Committee had not recommended a constituency but that the dominant emphasis of their report was the question of the accessibility of any constituency to the membership. This approach was a false one. The Party should go into the matter properly. We were now committed to fight an election campaign in a hide-bound Conservative constituency. Delegates should put their feet down and stop the E.C. making this blunder. If publicity was aimed at, then we should be certain that the capitalists will not give us this publicity. The only way to get publicity would be by giving news value, and this we could not give in N. Paddington. In the beginning, Party members would be stimulated but when what had happened became obvious, despair would take its place. The mistake would provide our enemies with a weapon to use against us. The Party should be prepared consistently to work a constituency year after year and the Conservative stronghold of N. Paddington is the last place to which we could devote our efforts. The hour was not too late to compel the E.C. to change its choice. A member of the Parliamentary Committee in response to enquiries gave particulars of the voting at the last three general elections in a number of London constituencies. The General Secretary outlined the considerations which had led to the E.C.'s decision. He said that in his view it was not essential that any constituency chosen by the Party should be predominantly Labour, and further that conditions had changed so much since the last general elections that the results could not be accepted as reliable guides. In N. Paddington in 1929 the Labour and Conservative votes had been practically equal, which showed that the attitude of the electors there was by no means fixed. Accessibility to the membership could not be ignored. If members were compelled to undertake long journeys to get to the constituency this meant an equivalent amount of time being lost to the Party's work. The East Ham N. campaign before the war had been seriously handicapped by this factor. There were sufficient members in N. Paddington to sign the nomination paper, and while this was not all-important, it did remove one anxiety from the Party. The E.C. considered N. Paddington to be convenient, compact and suitable for a Party election campaign. A member of Paddington branch supported the E.C.'s proposal, while delegates from Hackney supported Hackney Central on the grounds of the Party's activity in the district, and the existence of live branches in the locality. In opposition to Hackney Central it was pointed out that only four members lived in the constituency, and more would be needed to sign the



nomination paper. Details of past and present propaganda in the constituencies mentioned were given. A member of the Parliamentary Committee said that his Committee had been compelled to report in accordance with the instructions of the E.C. which were that they were to take into account factors such as a Labour constituency, work done in the past, number of members living in the constituency and accessibility to the membership, and that they had found themselves unable to recommend any constituency which complied with these conditions. As far as he was concerned Hackney Central was as accessible as N. Paddington. The work done in the immediate past and during the present time was the main factor to be taken into account. We were more likely to get publicity in Hackney Central than N. Paddington. Hackney branch was active and strong. A West Ham delegate said that it would make a big difference whether the constituency chosen was Labour or Conservative, but even Conservative constituencies varied considerably. For example, Ilford was a Tory constituency but populated largely by black-coated workers, whereas the workers in N. Paddington were mostly slum-dwellers who still voted Conservative. From our point of view, Ilford would be a better proposition. Paddington rejected West Ham's view of N. Paddington and said that the statements about the type of electorate there were incorrect. The last Delegate meeting and Conference had decided that as much work as possible should be put into the Paddington/Marylebone area with a view to electoral action. A Bloomsbury delegate claimed that the real test was the amount of propaganda value we could obtain from the campaign. Outdoor propaganda was not the test, this would play only a small part towards our success. In East Ham N. the canvassers had found that scarcely anyone had become acquainted with the Party as a result of outdoor meetings. The Parliamentary Committee must find out how many members were prepared to undertake the essential work of contacting workers in their own homes. Another delegate said that the future must be considered as well as the present. The Party had lacked a plan for permanent Parliamentary activity. The East End of London had been a stronghold of the working-class movement and the area round Hackney Central lent itself to the future development of Party electoral activity.

Resolution - W. Heelas and M. Ingram (Leyton) "That this Conference recommends that the E.C. decision regarding N. Paddington be revoked and Hackney Central be chosen as the constituency to be contested at the next General Election."  
Lost 15 - 16.

Resolution - G. Clark and J. Modlin (Islington) "That this Conference recommends that the E.C. decision regarding N. Paddington be revoked and N. Islington be chosen as the constituency to be contested at the next General Election".

An Islington delegate stated that his branch was young and active and that the Party is well-known in the area through propaganda over a number of years. A non-delegate claimed that N. Islington had a long standing democratic tradition and that this was the type of constituency we should choose.

The resolution was carried 20 - 12.

#### EDUCATION.

##### (b) Head Office Classes

Resolution - W. Sykes and A. Young (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to set up a committee to investigate the possibilities of running further Head Office classes".

In opening, the Bloomsbury delegate said that a writers' class seemed very necessary in view of the difficulty the Editorial Committee found in dealing with articles from new writers, the



standard not being high enough for the "S.S." A history class was also called for. Another delegate suggested a class in logic to help young speakers and writers to put the Party's case in an effective manner. A tutor of a past writers' class said that this class came to an end at the beginning of last year. Arrangements had been made to start again this year, but unfortunately this had fallen through owing to the inability of one of the tutors to attend. If a sufficient number of members wanted a writers' class one could be started practically immediately after the Conference. It should be borne in mind that some of the poor articles sent in for the "S.S." were written by members who had attended a writers' class, which showed that it was essential to have a considerable amount of experience in order to become an effective writer. Wide and general reading in the socialist classics was also necessary. A delegate suggested that in view of the poor attendance at previous classes it might be advantageous to amalgamate the various classes into one general class to cover all the subjects required. The mover rejected this suggestion on the grounds that specialization was necessary. The view was expressed that branches both in London and the provinces should run their own classes for the benefit of members who could not get to Head Office.

The resolution was carried 25 - 0.

#### AMENDMENTS TO RULE.

Paddington Branch. Rule 4, Lines 3 and 4. "Delete .... 'members of the Central branch excepted. Such members shall' .... and insert .... 'Central branch members, however, shall' ...." 3d 30 - 11.

Islington Branch. Rule 28, Line 3. "Delete sentence beginning .... 'there must be ....' Lost 4 - 45.

Paddington Branch. New Rule (To be inserted after Rule 25.) "That notices convening a Party meeting shall be sent to all members of the Party in the same way as Party voting papers, together with an agenda of the business coming before such meetings, at least 10 days before the date of the meeting". Lost 25 - 26.

#### STATUS OF PAID OFFICIALS.

RESOLUTION (E) - Ealing Branch. "That this the E.C.'s memorandum on the status of paid officials (as amended by Party poll) be accepted."

RESOLUTION (F) - Marylebone Branch. "That the status of paid officials memorandum be revised to delete the clause stating that .... 'the salary for all Party positions shall be the same' .... and to insert .... 'that the sum be arrived at between the E.C. and the member concerned on the basis of what the Party member requires, and what the Party can afford'."

After referring to and criticising the efforts of the past E.C. to fix a standard of payment for full-time members based on some outside standard, a Marylebone delegate pointed out that the needs of various people varied and that the equality of pay decided upon by the E.C. would mean that some members would receive less than they needed. The method suggested by the Marylebone resolution was fair and democratic. A non-delegate claimed that the existence of this memorandum showed that the framers of it considered there was a difference in their relationships to the Party of paid and unpaid members. The existing rules and machinery of the Party were quite sufficient to govern all members whether paid or unpaid. Members joined the Party in order to work for it, regardless of payment. If all payment is to be equal, then the sum arrived at must be fixed regardless of the needs of members. According to the memorandum all paid members were to be appointed by the E.C. but in the case of officials elected by the Party this could not be done and



therefore the memorandum was unworkable. Another non-delegate claimed that there could not be precise equality even under socialism. In support of the resolution of Baling branch approving the memorandum in its entirety, it was said that the memorandum endeavoured to lay down a set of conditions both for the protection of the Party and of the paid member. The drafting of the memorandum had been shown to be necessary by the considerable amount of time spent at the last Conference discussing what were the precise rights and duties of paid members. A non-delegate asserted that whether we liked it or not there was a big difference in their approach to the Party when members obtained full-time positions. Their livelihoods now depended on the Party. If the principle of inequality of pay were accepted, it might well lead to members not being paid on the basis of their needs but rather that there would be an attempt to fix the rate paid by reference to similar occupations outside the Party. A delegate considered that while the Party must adhere to the principle of equality, allowance might have to be made for any special circumstances surrounding a member. A further point made was that there was a danger, when payment was made according to needs, that a member in poor circumstances might receive an amount which would ensure that he remained in his lowly condition.

Resolution (E) was carried 28 - 19.

Resolution (F) was lost 19 - 27.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (ix) - Bloomsbury Branch. "Contesting Municipal elections".

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (x) - Paddington Branch. "Should the Party contest Municipal elections prior to contesting Parliamentary elections"

Resolution - J. D'Arcy and A. Young (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference is of the opinion that the best interests of the Party will be furthered by entering the field of local elections at every suitable opportunity, and that this Conference also welcomes the entry of Glasgow branch into the forthcoming Municipal campaign and further recommends the E.C. carefully to watch this campaign, regarding it as a useful experiment for the further guidance of the Party".

Against the resolution it was urged that there was a grave danger in entering the Municipal field first of all. All energies should be directed towards capturing the central body, Parliament. In local authorities, we shall be administering the capitalist system. The activities of local councils are severely circumscribed by Parliament. The Declaration of Principles put "National" before "Local" and it appeared that the framers of the D. of P. considered the first step should be to capture "National" power. Another delegate said that there was a big difference between the local and national bodies. Glasgow branch should have first put up a candidate for the House of Commons. A non-delegate said that it was indiscreet for the Party to enter the Municipal field and deal with the trivial matters discussed on local councils. We should get involved in all sorts of questions which would not give us a chance of getting the socialist position home. Just one candidate put forward at a Municipal election would label us a freak organisation. In support of the resolution a Bloomsbury delegate said that local government voting list now had been extended to all young people and we should be appealing to the same people as in a General election. Local government activities in the future would be the subject of live controversy. Housing, rates, workers' pay, etc. would all be issues after the war. The Glasgow delegate said that his branch considered that great experience in electioneering could be gained from contesting a Municipal election. Further, no £150 deposit was involved.



Another delegate said that as we were dependent on the support of socialists at any election, the question as to which campaign should be fought first, local or national, did not arise. The matter would take a natural course. It was claimed that we should obtain more publicity from local elections than from national. The activities of local councils receiving considerable notice in local papers. A non-delegate claimed that it appeared that the opposition to contesting municipal elections arose from a certain amount of fear in members' minds. While the prospect of getting a candidate in Parliament seemed fairly remote, it might be possible fairly quickly to get one elected to a local council, and some members seemed somewhat perturbed at the thought. The problems dealt with by local councils were similar fundamentally to those dealt with by Parliament, and just as a socialist M.P. would have a lot to say from a working-class angle in Parliament, so would the position be the same on a local council. Older members of the Party present said that there was no question in the early days of the Party contesting National elections prior to local elections. In fact, Municipal elections were the first contested by the Party. If we get control of the central power, we must also have control of the local power. Local councils would be used to introduce the new form of society; National elections came as a rule at greater intervals of time than local elections, and fighting local elections would give us a greater opportunity of getting our point of view across in between times. A member of the Parliamentary Committee claimed that some of the branches must wake up and see what the real task was in their own areas. In a large number of cases branches were composed of members living outside the branch area. Branches should make it their first consideration to put over propaganda to the electorate in their particular neighbourhood.

The resolution was carried 25 - 6.

The Conference terminated at 4.30 p.m. Sunday, 1st April.

C. C. Groves, (General Secretary.)

Rugby Chambers,  
2, Rugby Street,  
London, W.C.1.

#### DELEGATION.

Total possible ... 61 delegates representing 21 Branches.

Present -

<u>1st Day</u>	...	41	"	"	17	"
<u>2nd Day</u>	...	38	"	"	17	"
<u>3rd Day</u>	...	36	"	"	16	"

Eccles, Hamilton, Leeds and Dagonham were not represented.

Collections amounting to £15-19-11 were taken during the proceedings.